

# DESERT WEST DANCE ACADEMY COMPANY HANDBOOK 2023/24

Below you will find all of the information you need to know exactly what to expect for the upcoming year. We believe that our success comes as a result of providing solid training and quality service, along with an underlying belief in the strength of our organization. We have created this handbook to offer our dancers and their parents a clear understanding of their commitments and responsibility to the Company Dance Program. Dates and/or expenses listed in this handbook are subject to change. Note that this handbook encompasses all of the Company program. Information regarding competitions does not apply to those who are not on the competition team. Make sure you read everything to be sure you understand the commitment for the year. If any questions don't hesitate to contact the studio at [admin@desertwestdance.net](mailto:admin@desertwestdance.net) or Hayley at [hayleyjp18@gmail.com](mailto:hayleyjp18@gmail.com)

**Our Mission:** Our mission is to train and develop leading artists in the dance industry while maintaining a healthy, inclusive, and innovative team environment.

## COMMITMENT

The Desert West Dance Company is designed for the serious dancer who is highly motivated in the performing arts. Being a Company dancer is a prestigious and coveted position; it is a privilege that requires hours of hard work and most importantly dedication and commitment. Those selected for company will possess the following:

- Must emphasize healthy mind and body
- Must be self-motivated and able to self-evaluate
- Must have solid technical and performance skills
- Strong desire to grow and develop as a dancer
- Must have a sense of humor, bright smile, and positive attitude
- Have respect for the team and staff
- Show support for the studio, teachers, and fellow dancers
- A supportive family base that shows respect for the teachers and students at all times

Company participants are required to participate from August 2023 through Recital 2024, or July Nationals 2024 if on the competition team. This is a serious commitment and will not be taken lightly. Participants are expected to fulfill this commitment. All students and their parents will be required to sign an agreement contract encompassing the information provided to you in this handbook, the performance letter, and the competition letter. Any violation of these forms may result in the dancer's immediate removal from the Desert West Dance Company program. If a dancer quits mid-season, said dancer is never allowed into Company again, unless under special

circumstance approved beforehand. For any reason, at any time Rachel and Hayley have the right to dismiss a dancer/family from Desert West Dance Academy. If said dancer/family were to be dismissed and/or quits Company, no refunds will be given. This includes and is not limited to costumes, costume fees, tuition, privates, and competition fees. Quitting mid-season is detrimental to everyone in the company, so please consider this time frame carefully before committing to the program. A tentative schedule of events will be provided to you.

## FINANCIAL EXPECTATIONS AND COMMITMENTS

Being in a program such as this requires a certain financial commitment. All fees are non-refundable. Once you have committed to Company, we will be compiling a spreadsheet of each dancer's individual fees for the year. This should be available by July at the latest. You will be able to see (in one place) all of your fees and due dates for the year! We also send reminders.

**Tuition:** This is your monthly class dues. This charge covers ALL required classes for company members. All additional classes added that are not on your schedule, see tuition rates to estimate your tuition (i.e. tap, musical theater, etc.). Monthly tuition is due on the 1st of each month and is late after the 10th. All other fees are late after the posted due dates. A late fee of \$15 will be added to any late payments. A \$15 bank fee will be assessed for non-sufficient funds, canceled, and/or returned payments as well as the corresponding late fee.

**Summer Dance:** Company dancers are required to sign up and pay for a minimum of 2 weeks of their required classes in July. The weeks will be prorated by the front desk if you are doing less than the full month. Even if you do not attend in July, this is required for all company members.

**Competition Choreography Fees:** A one-time fee per dancer, per group dance is to be paid for each routine your child is placed into. This includes all choreography, music selection, cutting the music, extra rehearsals, costume design, etc. all done by the choreographer. These fees can be found on the competition letter next to the choreographer's name for the dance(s) you are chosen for. Once you have committed to these pieces, you are committing to the entire year and every competition. There is NO missing competitions or opting out. Please make sure you understand these fees and what you are committing to.

**Competition Costume Fees:** This will cover the costumes needed for each of the dances your child is placed into. These will be worn at every competition and our Competition Showcase. Our competition costume deposit ranges from \$75 for a child size and \$85 for an adult size per dance, due September 1st. Under all circumstances, we try to keep the cost down to the minimum possible. By accepting placement in this program, you agree to purchase and wear the costumes. Dancers will not receive a costume until paid in full. All teachers reserve the right to

do a “group alteration” to any costume. Group alterations will be done by our studio staff members. These consist of reconstructing a costume, rhinestoning, creating a different style or fit for the costume, etc. Costume alteration fees (if applicable) will be due October 1st. All individual sizing alterations are the responsibility of the parent and must be professionally altered. It is mandatory for all alterations to be 100% complete prior to the first performance.

**Competition/Convention Fees:** The Desert West Dance Competition Team is attending 5 regional competitions/conventions, and 1 national competition in July. All dancers are required to participate in all regional and national competitions and conventions. All are mandatory, unless noted otherwise. Optional competitions and conventions are also available for those interested! Hayley will send out more information about these opportunities as they come up.

Note: If interested in competing a solo, duet, or trio you must attend the Specialty Routine Audition on July 1st, 2023. Information about these routines will be discussed in a separate document.

**Extra Fees:** Extra fees such as company shirts and jackets can be found on the Performance Company Letter.

## COMPANY POLICIES

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory for ALL Company classes. Regular participation and being on time to all required Company classes and rehearsals is extremely important! Proper attendance is an essential component of the dancer’s education and progress. The consistency and repetition of training is necessary for proper technique to be learned. A dancer who misses a class and/or rehearsal may hold back the progress of the entire team. We recognize that things come up and are understanding of each situation, if it’s not done in an excessive manner. When it comes to school and family activities you will find DWDA to be accommodating and flexible. Being a well-rounded individual is important, and we support students pursuing other activities. However, by accepting placement in this program, you have agreed that this is a priority in your schedule. When it comes to participation on a performing/competitive team, skills are constantly being taught and students must be present! Below will explain the attendance policy for Company members.

- Weekly Class Policy: Two (2) absences in each class are permitted per two month attendance period in all required classes. Ten (10) or more combined absences per two month attendance period in all classes is considered excessive, even if absence limits have NOT been exceeded in the individual classes. When a dancer misses class for any reason it will count towards their

limit. If a dancer is late, leaves early, comes to class unprepared, or observes without a note it counts as a  $\frac{1}{3}$  absence towards their limit. Any combination of those adding up to 3 will be recorded as a full absence. Although dancers are allowed two absences, we encourage perfect attendance as dancers should only be absent if absolutely necessary. However, should a dancer be absent, they need to attend a make-up class or private technique lesson discussed with and chosen by Miss Hayley within one month of the missed class. Attending an additional class does not delete nor give credit for an absence, but is for the purpose of keeping up with the technique missed. Missed classes for any reason must be cleared personally through Miss Hayley. Mandatory school events, family emergencies, and illnesses are considered excused absences. Unexcused absences are not tolerated and will have consequences, so please contact the studio if you know you will be absent. Dancers will be given a warning on their second absence in that particular class. If a dancer fails to follow the attendance policy they will be placed on a two week probationary period. This will consist of the dancer having to attend every one of their enrolled classes, plus assigned make ups. If the dancers fail to adhere to the stipulations of their probation then they will lose privileges and be removed from Company indefinitely. Attendance will be monitored very closely in all classes. When it comes to observing/sitting out of class, dancers are only required to come in and observe if they are injured and will not be allowed to observe if they are sick. Dancers are to not come into the studio while sick, and if a teacher believes they are ill they will be sent home. If a dancer is not sent to the studio with a doctor's note, they will not be allowed to sit out of class. The note will need to include what you are sitting out for and how long you need to sit out. Not doing this can potentially lead you to probation. If you are sitting out, you are expected to take notes and participate as best as you possibly can. Communicating with your teachers ahead of time is super important!

- Rehearsal Policy: We will also be having Saturday rehearsals throughout the season to practice, clean, and review critiques for our group dances. We expect your dancer to be there. It's mandatory for all students to come to all rehearsals. Absences must be approved by Hayley minimally 48 hours prior with permission (not including "Choreo Camp"). Competition Team Members cannot miss two consecutive rehearsals, excused or not, and dancers cannot miss the rehearsal right before a competition or performance (even if a Spring Break or other studio closure happens between the rehearsal and competition or performance). A dancer also cannot do a private lesson to make up for a missed competition rehearsal. Violations of these rules could be cause for things such as being moved positions in a routine or immediate dismissal from that dance. These can be either temporarily or for the duration of the season. Missing excessive rehearsals may also cause your dancer to be removed from the Competition Team entirely. Should a dancer be removed from a single dance or the Competition Team due to any team policy violation, any and all fees paid up to that date are forfeited and you will owe a \$150 respacing fee for each dance that student was placed into. The schedule is put out ahead of time so you can plan around when your dancer needs to be present. We do our best to keep these to a minimum.

**Code Of Conduct:** All dancers are to speak and act in a respectful manner towards other dancers, and the DWDA instructors and staff members. Dancers are to come prepared to listen and learn. You are a part of a team and are expected to support, help, and work together with all of your peers. Classes may vary in ages, levels, and abilities. Poor attitudes, poor conduct, or any unnecessary drama toward other students or instructors will not be tolerated within our Company or anywhere in the studio. These behaviors will result in warnings that could result in termination. Disrespecting or being discourteous towards a faculty member or another student in any way is grounds for disciplinary action that may result in dismissal from class, removal from Company, probation, suspension, or being asked to leave the studio permanently. Parents will be held to the same codes of conduct as the students, and parents who fail to do so will be asked to leave. Desert West Dance Academy is a drug/alcohol/tobacco free environment.

**Communication:** We communicate via email, the band app, and the google calendar regarding important studio and company matters. If you are not receiving these messages, let the Front Desk Staff know right away.

**Dress Code:** Dress Codes MUST be followed by our Company members. NO EXCUSES. You are a role model and it's your job to represent the studio and set good examples for others. It is disrespectful to come to dance class in anything other than dance attire. Students not following dress codes may be asked to observe (and it will be reflected in your attendance). Hair must always be out of the face, and shoes used in class may not be worn outside. At DWDA, we want to teach our students to respect the art of dance. Dress codes cut down on distractions in class and helps promote unity. Dance is a discipline and begins with the way a student dresses for class. A neat and tidy appearance sets an attitude of attentiveness and respect for students, teachers, and the art of dance. Below is the *Company Dress Code Policy*.

- **BALLET:** Hair must always be in a clean bun. All girls will wear their company team color leotard, pink ballet tights, and pink canvas split sole ballet shoes. Wrap skirts are allowed, but no shorts! As for leotards, we are going to use the brand "Theatrical" as our reference. It can be found on Discount Dance and it has a lot of style options. You can wear other brands too, as long as the colors match the theatrical brand's colors. Blossoms will wear red, Lilies will wear purple, Wildflowers will wear royal, and Sunflowers will wear black. Link: [Theatricals Leotards](#)
- **JAZZ:** Any dance attire. Tan pirouette shoes or tan slip on jazz shoes.
- **CONTEMPORARY:** Any dance attire. Tan pirouette shoes or barefoot.
- **HIP HOP:** Any dance attire. Any clean sneakers/gym shoes (make sure they are free of debris and rocks- to preserve our Marley floors)
- **LEAPS & TURNS:** Any dance attire. Tan pirouette shoes, tan slip on jazz shoes, or barefoot.
- **REHEARSAL:** Any dance attire. Any shoes needed for the competition dances you're in will be needed for the rehearsal hour.

## PERFORMANCES/SHOWS

Throughout the year The DWDA Company performs in various functions and community events. Further information will be sent out on these as dates approach. These performances are mandatory, unless discussed with Hayley beforehand.

**Community Performances:** Performance opportunities will come up as the year goes on, so be on the lookout! It is important that we accept these invitations from the community. No costume needed, dancers will wear their company shirts, black leggings, and the correct shoes for the styles they are performing. Hair and makeup for all performances will be the same as competition.

**Christmas Performances:** Performing for our community, especially around Christmas time, is an amazing way to get into the holiday spirit. Each company group gets 2-3 dances to perform in all of our Christmas performances. No costume needed, dancers will wear their studio Christmas shirts, black leggings, and the correct shoes for the styles they are performing. More information will be sent out as the dates become closer. We will also be filming a Christmas video! This will be filmed in the studio, edited, and then released at our Company Christmas Party!

**Competition Showcase:** Competition showcase is where our Competition Team can show all their hard work and dedication to friends, family, and the community who may or may not be able to see them perform and compete at competitions. People can come and watch all of our pieces that we're bringing around all season long! Dancers will wear their costumes and their company shirts. Hair and makeup is the same as competition.

**Recital:** It's mandatory for all companies to participate in their required class recital dances, but can opt out of any recital dances from extra/recreational classes they're taking. If you want to opt out of a dance, for a recreational class, contact the front desk so that you aren't charged for a costume. Makeup for the recital is the same as competition. Recital fees will be paid towards all company classes except for leaps & turns, one ballet class, and competition rehearsal hour.

## COMPETITION GROUP DANCES

All dance routines that dancers are selected for are required. There is no opting out. Each dancer will have 1-4 group dances that they will be placed into, which will be competed at five (5) regional and one (1) national competitions/conventions throughout our dance season.

Choreography Camp: Choreography Camp is when you learn your competition dances. We will have two sessions with separate schedules, which will be provided to you separately and ASAP. Each dance will be placed in one of the following sessions:

August 5th, 12th, & 19th - First session of camp  
September 9th, 16th, & 23rd - Second session of camp

Attendance is REQUIRED for ALL choreography days. You cannot miss, no exceptions. If you miss a choreography day, you will be removed from the dance and risk being removed from our Competition program all together. Plan ahead for these dates! The commitment to Company means attending all scheduled classes, all rehearsals, and being available for all competitions & performances.

**Extra Practices:** On occasion a teacher may find it important to add additional mandatory rehearsals before a competition. We make every effort to give enough notice so families are able to coordinate their schedules. These practices do not cost extra money. They usually take place on Friday evenings, Saturday evenings, and/or on Sundays. Remember these are to benefit the dancers. We all want them to be comfortable and to dance their best. Sometimes due to cancellations or other issues, a routine just needs some extra time.

**Extra training opportunities:** We also know how important it is for our dancers to take advantage of extra training opportunities at workshops and conventions. When it doesn't conflict with weekend choreography or rehearsals, we encourage our students to attend these events to maximize their development and growth! However, they must register for these events through the studio. Hayley will send out information regarding this as events come up.

## COMPETITION ETIQUETTE

Students must arrive at competition and be READY to perform/rehearse at least 1 ½ hours prior to their first scheduled routine. If you will be doing hair and makeup at the competition, please allow yourself an appropriate amount of time to be ready in 1 ½ hours prior to their first scheduled performance. Required Company Competition jackets should be worn during award ceremonies, and studio gear should be worn if not in costume.

Participation for all company members is mandatory for ALL required competitions, conventions, master classes, & performances. If you have to miss a competition then there's a chance that you will be removed from the routine indefinitely. The schedule for all such events will be on the calendar and provided to you separately, along with dates, fees, and due dates. All performing groups are a team effort and we need all participants of the team to perform at EVERY dance competition on the schedule. NO EXCEPTIONS!

### **Competition Guidelines:**

1. It is mandatory for all competitors to wear their DWDA company jacket and studio gear for all competitions and conventions. NO EXCUSES. Gear from the competition or regular clothing must wait to be worn until after. If you lose your jacket you are responsible for buying a new one.
2. No eating or walking around in costumes. They're to be worn in the dressing room, backstage, and on stage. If you need to for any reason go anywhere else, either change or wear your jacket on top.
3. Nail polish, acrylics, and non-competition jewelry are NOT allowed to be worn on stage.
4. Every dancer must attend awards unless discussed beforehand.
5. Everyone is expected to work as a team player and help in the growth of their fellow teammates. Try to be there for other groups and be supportive of your team!
6. Gossiping will not be tolerated about other students or parents within Desert West Dance Academy or about other dance studios/other competitors during competition/conventions.
7. While representing DWDA, students and parents are expected to display good sportsmanship conduct to everyone they are in contact with. During competition, whether we win or lose, we are expected to have a winning and positive attitude.
8. All students and parents are to respect the teachers, do what is asked of them, and abide by the Code of Conduct.
9. Parents are responsible for looking after their own children. There is to be no running around, making messes, misbehavior, etc. Plan ahead! It's recommended to pack a bag with activities like puzzles, coloring books, toys, ipads, etc. to keep the youngsters entertained during long wait times.

**Benefits of competition & the competition experience:** Competing against the finest teams allows our teachers and students the opportunity to be inspired by the talent across the country. This is how DWDA is continuously improving and evolving with the times, while challenging ourselves to grow to new heights. Competition allows the dancer to perform more frequently and teaches them the importance of thriving under pressure. Students who wish to pursue the professional world of dance have an opportunity to grow and develop their performance skills. Being a part of our competition team helps a dancer build their confidence while simultaneously becoming a well-rounded dancer, a well-trained performer, and develop team-building skills and self-confidence that will last a lifetime. Desert West Dance Academy approaches competitions as being an educational opportunity, a pre-professional opportunity, and a fun activity. It is important to understand the "competition" aspect of being a member of the DWDA Company. Competition results are strictly a subjective opinion, and your child's growth should not be completely gauged by their scores or achievements at competitions. It is important to keep your competition experience positive and most importantly, be proud of the growth and development that takes place within your child. We do not foster competition within our Company, and all we



ask from our students is that each child works to their full capacity. We understand that each child is a gift to us, and each is uniquely different.

## CONVENTIONS/MASTER CLASSES

Understand that you are required to attend ALL workshop/convention classes when we attend conventions, and ALL master classes held at the studio. You are not allowed to pick and choose what classes you take. Respect every single teacher by taking their class, what you can learn from them is invaluable and not showing up to any one of their classes for any reason is very disrespectful. You can learn something from every teacher if you choose to, and you are responsible for what you learn in class. Conventions give our dancers the opportunity to take classes from teachers who aren't their day to day primary instructors, which helps them become more cultured, experienced, and appreciative of the art form. All performing groups are a team effort and we need all participants of the team to attend all such events on the schedule.

Along with this being required, you must also audition for the scholarships at conventions. We will have teachers making sure of this by popping into the dance rooms as classes are going. Hair must be pulled back and students are to look clean and professional from head to toe. Make sure you have all of your dance shoes and extra clothes needed for all classes. Clothing depends on the classes, examples of easy clothing to bring would be sweats/t-shirt for hip hop & a fringe dance skirt for ballroom. Age groups are separated in classes.

## ENDNOTES

**Parent Roles:** Desert West Dance Academy is a drama free zone! Parents and dancers are expected to be supportive, respectful, and courteous to all team members and their families at all times. This studio will not tolerate rudeness, jealousy, resentment, or disrespect to another team member, their family, a teacher, nor the staff members. It makes no difference to this studio how good your child is or who you are... you are not permitted to bring any negativity whatsoever into this facility, which is full of fabulous families and kids. Your role is the following:

- Lift up and support all of our children
- Teach your child that there is always going to be someone better than they are
- Teach your child to be happy for others
- Give a hand to those who may be behind or struggling
- Stand firmly behind and work with the teaching staff, showing your child that you are behind their coaches

We have observed in our many years of teaching and many years of dancing that the most successful children are those whose parents support their teachers and coaches 100%. These are the ones who do not bad-mouth or question a teacher in front of their children, and they are certainly the ones who are realistic about their children and their place on our team. We all want the children to succeed, but success is not measured by the trophy a child brought home, by the row in which they stand on stage, or by how many pirouettes they can do. Instead, it is measured by the effort that they put forth. If they give all they've got to give, what more can anyone ever expect?

We believe in the power of individuality and self-discovery, while emphasizing teamwork and unity. Our goal is to nurture your artistry and prepare you for a successful future through leadership and connections with fellow dancers. Joining our Company Program means more than just dance – it's an experience that builds lifelong friendships. Together we will push boundaries, create unforgettable moments, and support each other's journey to greatness.